

Integration; code and design enhancements

Web Authoring Applications Macromedia Dreamweaver 4 Fireworks 4 Studio

by Peter Dudar

The revolution is done with. Welcome to the *evolution*.

Macromedia's *Dreamweaver* has been lauded for introducing Roundtrip HTML and an open JavaScript-based API that enables developers to customize and extend the authoring application. *Dreamweaver 4* has enhanced its environment for both developers and designers; there's a new Code View and a Split View for manipulating code and visual design simultaneously, plus a Layout View for drawing cells and complex tables directly on the page.

Fireworks 4, Macromedia's vector and bitmap graphics application, provides new features such as drag-and-drop behaviors, a pop-up menu creator, Live Animation and selective JPEG compression—and has increased the capabilities of the Layers Panel and other features throughout.

Dreamweaver (left) and Fireworks (right) sport the common MACROMEDIA USER INTERFACE, with dockable tabbed floating panels and a Mini-launcher at the bottom of the document window.

Adobe has been trying to position *GoLive* and *Photoshop* as the preferred solution. Macromedia, as expected, plays tit-for-tat feature-wise; much of what's new in *Dream*-

weaver 4 is on Adobe's "How do they stack up" list (*GoLive 5* vs *Dreamweaver 3*). Already having an edge extensibility-wise and workgroup-wise, Macromedia has continued its effort to tighten the integration of its applications, along with streamlining multi-user workflows.

A COMMON INTERFACE, AND ROUNDTRIP EDITING

Macromedia User Interface. *Dreamweaver* and *Fireworks* now sport the Macromedia User Interface that was introduced in *Flash 5* (reviewed in *GX* Nov/Dec 2000). So the applications have common user interface elements, with consistent menu structures and dockable tabbed floating panels. They also employ a common color picker with an eyedropper with which you can sample from anywhere on the screen. Each also displays a Mini-launcher at the bottom of the document window, for accessing panels, windows and inspectors.

Roundtrip Graphics Editing. Launch-and-edit and launch-and-optimize integration lets you edit *Fireworks*-generated graphics from within *Dreamweaver*. *Dreamweaver*'s Property inspector readily identifies whether a selection is a *Fireworks* image, table or table slice. Holding down a key and clicking on an image within *Dreamweaver* is all that's required to launch *Fireworks* and access the source file. The graphic opens in an "Editing from *Dreamweaver*" window. When fin-

ished, just click Done—instantly you're back in *Dreamweaver*. Behind the scenes, *Dreamweaver* has exported the image using the current optimization settings for the PNG source file, updated the GIF or JPEG used by *Dreamweaver*, and saved the PNG file.

Previous users will especially appreciate that *Fireworks 4* both recognizes and preserves any changes made to the source HTML and JavaScript in *Dreamweaver*. These include changed links, edited image maps, and edited text in text slices.

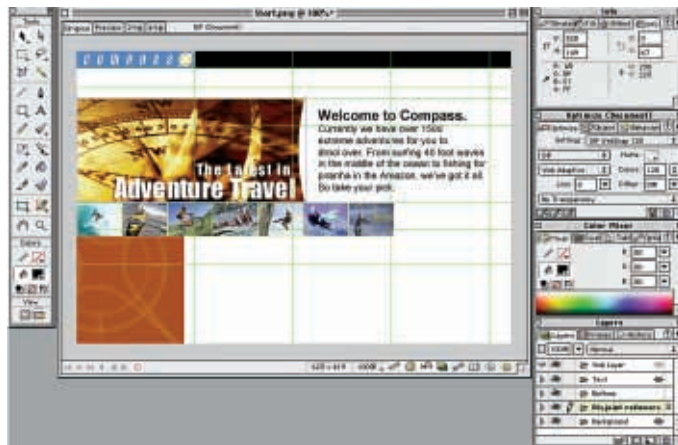
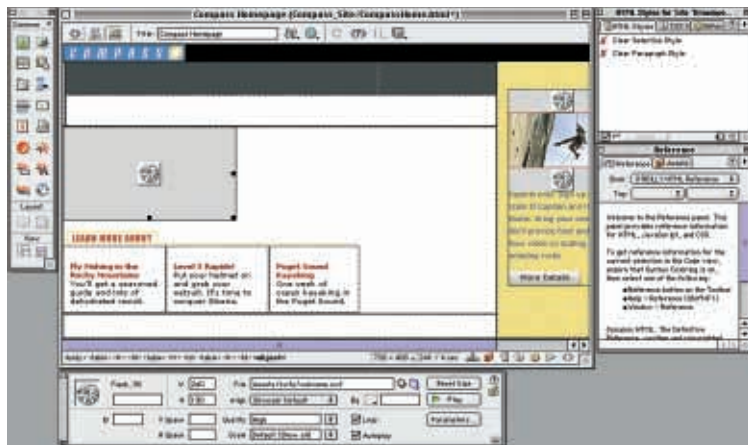
Clean file interchangeability means that a designer can pass sliced graphics to a programmer, who can add interactivity in *Dreamweaver*, then pass the graphics back to the designer for further editing in *Fireworks*, and so on.

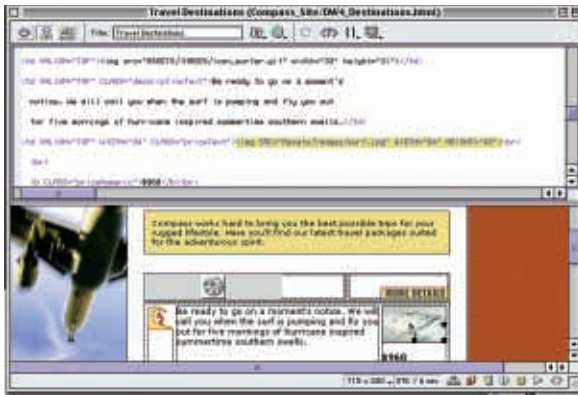
DREAMWEAVER 4

HTML, JAVASCRIPT AND O'REILLY

Dreamweaver 4's new coding features minimize the need for external editors such as *BBEdit* and *Allaire HomeSite* (which Macromedia recently acquired). *Dreamweaver*'s new Toolbar provides both Code View and Split View options. There's also a Design View option (which refers to either Standard View or the new Layout View).

Code View. Besides HTML, Code View enables you to edit JavaScript, XML, and other text documents directly in *Dreamweaver*. In your Prefs, you can set Version 4 to automatically open non-HTML files with extensions that you stipu-





SPLIT VIEW divides the main window into two resizable panes, so you can see both **CODE** and **DESIGN VIEWS** simultaneously.



(left) The integrated **JAVASCRIPT DEBUGGER** checks your code for syntax errors, then runs with the browser to check for logical errors. (right) The **O'REILLY CODE REFERENCE** is a lookup system for JavaScript, HTML, and CSS. Click the Toolbar's Reference button and the panel gives a detailed description of your selected element.

late. The defaults are .js, .txt, and .asa, but you can add as many as you want.

The Toolbar accesses auto-indenting, word wrap, line numbering, and punctuation balancing functions, among others. In version 4, live syntax coloring works with JavaScript as well as HTML.

Dreamweaver never rewrites HTML that's typed directly into its code editors; if you enter invalid code, the editor highlights it.

Split View. If you like to work with code and visuals interchangeably, then the new Split View may be just what you're looking for. Split View, as the name implies, divides the main window into two resizable panes, so you can see both Code and Design views simultaneously.

Highlighting in the two panes is dynamic. Likewise, as you add or change content in the Design View, *Dreamweaver* immediately displays the changes in the

Code View. But changes made in the code appear in the Design View only after you click in the Design pane again.

JavaScript Debugger. For users who get their hands dirty with JavaScript, there's a new integrated JavaScript Debugger for uncovering errors in your client-side JavaScript code. In Code View, the Debugger checks your code for syntax errors first, then as you watch, it runs with the browser to help you check for logical errors. By setting breakpoints in your code, you can stop the execution of the program and display the values of JavaScript objects and properties in a variable list. The JavaScript Debugger also provides Step Into/Step Out options to move through the JavaScript one line of code at a time.

The Debugger's shortcoming is that it works with few browsers. For Windows: *Netscape 4.5+* (excluding *Netscape 6*) and *Internet Explorer 4.0+*. For Macintosh: only *Netscape 4.5+* (excluding *Netscape 6*).

Integrated Code Reference. The new integrated O'Reilly Code Reference is a perk for coders and (like the Split View) a cool learning device. It's a lookup system for JavaScript, HTML, CSS, and Browser DOMs.

Better still, the Reference is context-sensitive. Just place your cursor in either Code or Design View, then click the Toolbar's Reference button. *Dreamweaver* pulls up a detailed description of the element in the floating Reference panel, with examples and browser compatibility info if appropriate. Let's say you select "function"; the panel accesses its JavaScript "book" and calls up its Object pop-up menu with "function" selected. Submenus enable cross-referencing.

Of course, you can also use the panel directly. But you have to scan indices to find a term—a search field would be nice.



DREAMWEAVER 4, FIREWORKS 4 STUDIO

Dreamweaver System Requirements

WINDOWS

Intel Pentium processor or equivalent, 166+ MHz
Windows 95/98/2000/ME/N
32 MB available RAM, 110 MB hard disk space

MACINTOSH

Power Macintosh, MAC OS 8.6 or 9X
32 MB available RAM, 135 MB hard disk space

Fireworks System Requirements

WINDOWS

Intel Pentium processor (Pentium II recommended)
Windows 95, 98, 2000, ME or NT
64 MB available RAM, 80 MB hard disk space
Adobe Type Manager Version 4 with Type 1 fonts

MACINTOSH

Power Macintosh Processor (G3 or higher recommended), Mac OS 8.6 or 9.X
64 MB available RAM, 80 MB hard disk space
Adobe Type Manager Version 4 with Type 1 fonts

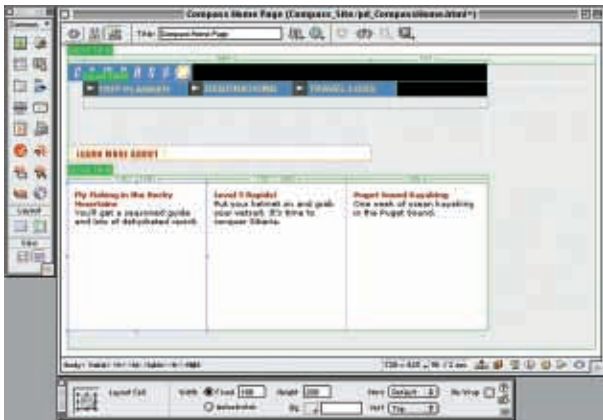
Pricing

Dreamweaver 4, Fireworks 4 Studio US\$449
Upgrade from Fireworks/Dreamweaver US\$199.
Dreamweaver 4 US\$299, upgrade US\$149
Fireworks 4 US\$299, upgrade US\$149

Macromedia, Inc.
800-457-1774; www.macromedia.com

LAYOUT VIEW, FLASH GRAPHICS

Layout View. The big news for designers in version 4 is the Layout View. As in *QuarkXPress* or *InDesign*, you create boxes for content directly on a page—but here, the boxes are table cells and tables. Select either the Cell or Table drawing option in the Objects panel, then just drag on the canvas.



LAYOUT VIEW. As in QuarkXPress or InDesign, you drag out boxes for content directly on a page—but here, the boxes are either table cells or tables. The application creates snappable gridlines on the go.

Dreamweaver's former solution was to draw layers in Standard View and convert them to tables. The new solution is comparable to *Adobe GoLive's* Layout Editor. But designers who find *GoLive's* obsessive implementation of drag-and-drop off-putting may feel more at home in *Dreamweaver's* Layout View. Also, instead of starting with the notion of imposing a visible layout grid on the page (yes, it's true that grid visibility can be turned on and off in either application), *Dreamweaver's* default approach is to start drawing on the blank canvas. The application then creates snappable gridlines on the go, based on the elements you create (sort of like slice lines in *Fireworks*)—the approach is intuitive, and pretty efficient for setting up aligned elements. Once you've sketched out a layout, you can make most adjustments in Layout view, but anticipate doing some fine-tuning back in Standard View.

Dreamweaver 4 lets you set columns or tables to AutoStretch, so the layout dynam-

ically resizes to the browser width without resizing elements. Layout cells can't be dragged to a new position, they can only be shifted via the keyboard—but they can be grouped into a draggable table. And you can un-nest a table, with just a click.

In Layout View, a table has a selectable tab and the widths of its constituents are indicated at the table's edge—these can be turned off for a clearer display of the page elements.

Flash text and buttons.

Dreamweaver now does editable vector graphics—start by clicking either the Insert Flash Text or Insert Flash Button option in the Objects panel.

The Flash Text dialog makes text formatting, rollover color and link options available. Mercifully, though you can't type directly in the layout, there's an Apply button. Note that you're limited to TrueType fonts; PostScript fonts don't show up in the dialog's menu. After returning to the layout, check your Flash text's rollover effect by clicking "Play" in the Property Inspector. Flash text doesn't wrap and is not searchable, so it's primarily useful for short passages.

The Flash Button dialog accesses a scrollable menu of button templates, plus previews. You can't alter the templates—just size your text to fit. But you can create your own externally, or download new styles as they become available online at www.macromedia.com/exchange. Flash buttons and text are clean and fast-loading,

but keep in mind that embedded Flash media require a browser plug-in (*Dreamweaver* creates Flash 3 files) and do not support the Alt attribute.

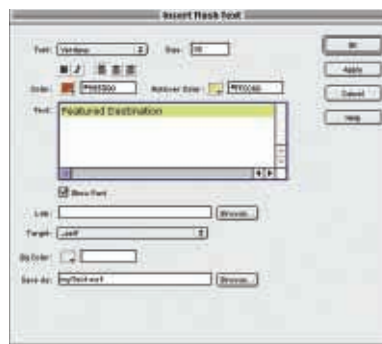
MANAGEMENT AND INTEGRATION

Asset Panel. Version 4 introduces an Asset Panel for tracking all your site media elements (akin to *Flash 5's* Movie Explorer). *Dreamweaver* automatically scans your site for new assets and categorizes them: Images, Colors (including non-Websafe), external URLs, Flash content, Shockwave content, QuickTime content, Scripts, Templates, and Library items (the Library has been subsumed into this panel). It takes just a couple of clicks to create Favorites lists, whose constituents can be grouped and assigned nicknames.

Inserting elements (including URLs) into the layout simply requires dragging-and-dropping icons from the Assets panel. Want to edit an asset? Just double-click its icon or preview, and if appropriate, the panel launches an external editing application. Got *Flash* or *QuickTime* movies? The panel will play them.

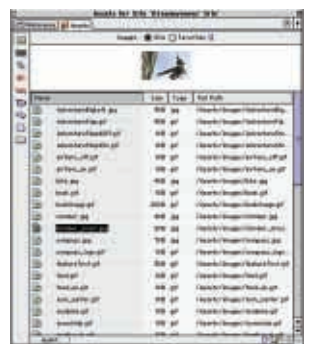
Site Reporting. The Site Reports dialog compiles and generates reports for several HTML attributes—external links, combinable nested font tags, missing Alt text, redundant nested tags, removable empty tags, and untitled documents. Besides troubleshooting site-wide, you can also limit the scope of a search. Conveniently, when you double-click a reported error, *Dreamweaver* opens the appropriate file and highlights the error in the code. For team use, you can run workflow reports to show who has checked out a file and

Create editable vector graphics in *Dreamweaver*. The **FLASH BUTTON** option (near right) calls up a dialog with a scrollable menu of button templates. The **FLASH TEXT** option (far right) calls up a dialog with a text input field.



The **ASSET PANEL** tracks all your site media elements.

Dreamweaver automatically categorizes your assets: Images, Colors, external URLs, Flash content, Shockwave content, QuickTime content, Scripts, Templates, and Library items.



which files have Design Notes associated with them.

Configurable Site Window. The Site Window has been goosed up for low-level site development tracking. Custom columns can be added via the Define Site dialog and associated with Design Notes; their content is directly editable in the Site Window. And when a file is checked out by a team member, clicking on his or her name enables you to communicate using version 4's integrated e-mail.

Integration. *Dreamweaver's* source control integration architecture enables third-party version control and content management systems to plug into its Site Window—version 4 ships with two source control options: *Microsoft Visual SourceSafe* and *WebDAV*.

FIREWORKS 4

D&D ROLLOVERS AND POP-UPS

Drag-and-drop rollovers. Creating complex rollovers in *Fireworks 4* is mainly a matter of dragging and dropping from one slice to another—you no longer have to go through the Behaviors panel. With two underlying images located on separate frames, you create disjoint rollovers by first dragging a drag-and-drop behavior handle from a triggering slice or hotspot onto a target slice. Then the Swap Image dialog opens; and you select the frame on which the rollover image resides. Done.

The drag-and-drop behavior relationship is represented by a blue line between the slices that redraws if you shift the slices. To delete a behavior, click on the blue line and click OK in the resulting dialog. Then just drag again if you want to reassign the behavior to a different image.

Pop-up menu creator. With *Fireworks'* new Pop-up Menu Creator, you can create sophisticated multi-level pop-up menus, using a step-by-step wizard. In dialog 1, you enter menu text, create submenus, and specify the URL addresses to which the entries point. In dialog 2, you define the menu's appearance, using HTML formatting or images for Up and Over states.

On the canvas, a blue outline of the

menu appears on or near your slice, looking like a blank table linked to the slice by a drag-and-drop behavior line—the cells represent the menu entries. The pop-up can be shifted to anywhere on the page.

Customizable keyboard shortcuts. Version 4 enables you to create custom keyboard shortcuts, or switch to shortcut systems from applications such as *FreeHand*, *Illustrator* or *Photoshop*.

Fireworks 4 has all sorts of minor usability enhancements. For instance, you can drag the pointer past the canvas in order to work on the edges of the artwork; Fill handles appear by default, so you can edit the gradient fill of a vector object on the fly.

Also, you can now reposition a text block while the Text Editor is open—which almost makes up for having to input copy through a floating dialog. (Macromedia must find it galling that Adobe figured out how to make text input work directly on the canvas in *Photoshop 6*.)

The Bezier Pen has been brought up to par with those in *FreeHand* and *Flash*.

LAYER ENHANCEMENTS, LIVE ANIMATION AND COMPRESSION

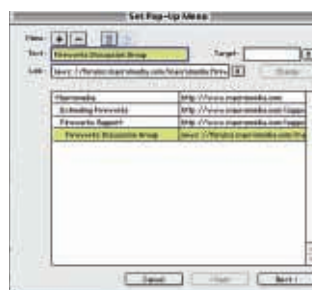
The Layers panel. The revamped Layers panel provides new masking capabilities, plus opacity and blend mode controls (multiply, screen, etc.). Layer entries can be expanded to show thumbnail views of the layer's objects—including slices and hotspots in the Web Layer. Better still, individual objects, as well as layers, can be turned off. Objects, for the most part, are as manipulable as layers via the panel.

The Layers panel is now both a vector and bitmap masking tool. Masking requires little more than clicking thumbnails and then clicking the Add Mask button at the bottom of the panel. And since objects and masks are represented separately, selecting overlapping elements for editing or for applying *Fireworks* effects and *Photoshop* filters is painless.

Live Animations. *Flash* developers may consider them passé, but animated GIFs are still with us. *Fireworks'* new Live animation controls allow you to set starting



Create disjoint rollovers by dragging a **DRAG-AND-DROP BEHAVIOR** handle from a triggering slice or hotspot onto a target slice. The relationship is represented by a blue line between the slices.

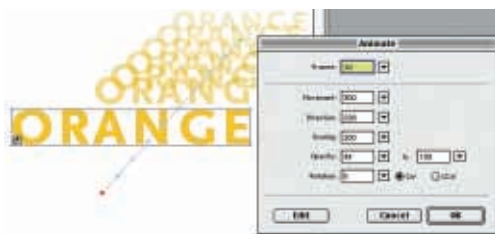


With *Fireworks'* **POP-UP MENU CREATOR**, you can create sophisticated multi-level pop-up menus, using a wizard that walks you through the process.



In the enhanced **LAYERS PANEL**, entries can be expanded to show thumbnail views of the layer's object. The Layers panel has also been made a vector and bitmap **MASKING** tool. Doing so requires little more than clicking thumbnails and then clicking the Add Mask button at the bottom of the panel.

and end points directly on screen, more or less as in *Director* or *Flash*. *Fireworks* attaches animation paths to animation symbols, with intermediate points representing frames. Properties are accessed in either the Animate dialog or Object panel: frames; movement distance; direction; scaling from start to finish; opacity from start to finish; and rotation. Movement and direction values can be changed by simply dragging the path's starting and end points; when you specify a number of frames, *Fireworks* adds the number required to complete the action.

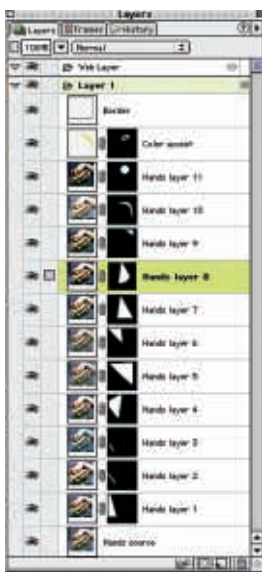


LIVE ANIMATION controls enable you to set starting and end points directly on screen. Intermediate points on the animation paths represent frames. Values can be changed by simply dragging the starting and end points.

With Fireworks' **SELECTIVE JPEG COMPRESSION**, you can compress areas of particular interest at a high level, backgrounds at a low level—and voila, you've reduced the overall size of the image without obviously compromising quality.



You can **IMPORT NATIVE PHOTOSHOP** files, retaining layers, masks, editable text and many other aspects. Photoshop layer masks convert to Fireworks object masks; and layer effects convert to Fireworks Live Effects. Blending modes for layers convert to Fireworks blending modes for corresponding objects.



With controls now in the workspace, playback and stepping through animations is much easier than in previous versions of *Fireworks*. But note that Live animation is for *simple* animations: movement paths are restricted to straight lines and intermediate points on the paths can't be repositioned. (Curved paths need to be done frame-by-frame.)

Selective JPEG Compression. We evaluate pictures with our mind as well as our eyes. For instance, if the human subject in a photo looks good, then it's a good photo—we don't care as much about the background. Using *Fireworks 4*'s selective JPEG compression, you can compress areas of particular interest at a high level, areas of

lesser significance at a low level—and voila, you've reduced the overall size of the image without obviously compromising quality.

To start, save a selection as a JPEG mask. Then pull up the Selective JPEG Settings dialog via the Optimize panel, and input a compression value. You may intend to shave precious seconds off download time, but actually "improve" your picture by better directing the viewers' focus.

PHOTOSHOP, BATCH PROCESSING AND EXPORT CONTROLS

Photoshop Import and Export. Simply put, *Photoshop* is ubiquitous, so high fidelity support is de rigeur. With *Fireworks 4*, you can import native *Photoshop* files, retaining layers, masks, editable text and many other aspects. Import options have been shifted from the import dialog to Prefs, simplifying the import process (if you don't often change options). This is how *Fireworks* interprets *Photoshop* layers: each layer becomes a separate bitmap object on a single layer, or each layer becomes an object on a separate frame. *Fireworks* also imports flattened *Photoshop* file formats, but not *Photoshop* PDFs.

New in version 4: *Photoshop* layer masks convert to *Fireworks* object masks; layer effects convert to *Fireworks* Live Effects, if an equivalent exists. For instance, the Fill Color Live Effect is equivalent to *Photoshop*'s Color Fill Layer Effect (and consequently also exportable back to *Photoshop*). Blending modes for layers convert to *Fireworks* blending modes for corresponding objects, if the modes are supported. The first *Photoshop* alpha channel converts to transparent areas in the *Fireworks* image—additional alpha channels are not supported. *Photoshop* adjustment layers, clipping groups, and paths are not supported.

To export, select Save as>*Photoshop* PSD in the Export dialog. A "Maintain Editability over Appearance" setting converts objects to layers, keeps effects editable, and converts the text to editable text layers; the "Maintain *Fireworks* Appearance"

setting converts each object into an individual layer, turns effects into objects, and turns text into images; "Custom" enables you to specify separate settings for objects, effects, and text.

So in complex workflows, it's now more feasible to bring *Photoshop* images into *Fireworks*, do some editing, then export the images back into *Photoshop*, and on and on if necessary.

Import/Export Controls and Formats.

The above-mentioned Export dialog box has been re-designed so it's easier to use; options that don't apply to current export formats are either dimmed or hidden.

You can separately control anti-aliasing for text and for objects when importing *FreeHand 9* files; same for *Illustrator* and *CorelDraw*. *Fireworks* exports layers or slices, as well as HTML, into *Director*. The application imports EPS files as bitmap images. And Wireless Bitmap (WBMP) files can be both imported and exported.

Batch Processing. Using *Fireworks*' new batch-processing is fast and simple. In dialog 1, you select files. In dialog 2, you select tasks: Export, Scale, Find, Replace, Rename, or Commands (convert to grayscale, distribute to layers, etc.).

D4, F4, OR D4 F4 STUDIO?

Dreamweaver 4 is the best of its class. Like most design professionals, I've used *Photoshop* for years; I really like it, and intend to keep using it. So the question for a lot of users isn't "Should I use *Photoshop* or *Fireworks*?" It's "Should I use *Photoshop* plus *Fireworks*?" As of version 6, Web-specific *ImageReady* is just partially ingested by *Photoshop*, and may stay that way to keep a lid on *Photoshop*'s system requirements.

Fireworks 4 is functionally more streamlined than *Photoshop*, because it's only about the Web, and as such it's comprehensive. And it provides unparalleled integration with *Dreamweaver*.

If you currently own only *Dreamweaver* or *Fireworks* (and even if you own *Photoshop*) it's worth going for the *Dreamweaver 4 Fireworks 4 Studio* combination. 🍌